

**LISTENING TO THE HEARTBEAT OF GOD – FROM PASTOR
LAWRENCE**

*We are, according to the Bible,
made for family.
We're made for community,
we're made for togetherness,
we're made for friendship.
We're made to live in a delicate network
of interdependence,
for we are made for complementarity.
I have gifts that you don't have.
And you have gifts that I don't have.
Thus we are made different so that we can know our need of one another.
And this is a fundamental law of our being.
- Desmond Tutu*

The last twelve months uncovered so much so long hidden in plain sight. Among the truths revealed over this year is the wisdom that Archbishop Tutu reminds us of in the preceding passage - we are created for community.

Again and again through this pandemic, I experienced how worship and learning, fellowship and mission aren't simply nice upgrades to daily living in the twenty-first century. These practices of connection and care are absolutely foundational and fundamental to who I am as a person created by God and to who we are as the Body of Christ that is Oxford Presbyterian Church.

Writing in Germany as the Nazi government attempted to co-opt congregational life in
(Continued...on page 2) service of the state, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in Life Together that *the church is community through and in Jesus Christ.*

Bonhoeffer's use of the words through and in remind me of the threads woven together to make a cloth. These threads create fabric from the clothes we wear to the cloth that adorns the communion table when we share the Lord's Supper.

The threads that run vertically in fabric are known as the warp while the horizontal threads are called the weft. A single thread has a great deal of potential but very little strength on its own. When threads are aligned in the same direction and then additional threads are woven over and under one another - a fabric results that is strong and flexible, durable and resilient. Furthermore the fabric may be truly beautiful!

As the Holy Spirit weaves us into a Christ-like faith community, it's right and good to step back from the congregational fabric and see how the public ministry (the front side of the cloth) and the behind the scenes ministry (the back side) are interfaced. This month, I'd like to focus our gratitude on a staff member whose superior work behind the scenes allowed the public aspects of our ministry to shine.

Eight years ago, Priscilla Parks became our custodian. She came to this part-time position well qualified by her role as custodian at Miami where she achieved recognition as a Master Building Custodian.

Though many in the congregation may not have seen Priscilla at work, we certainly noticed with gratitude the quality of her work. Throughout the weekday, as well as evenings and weekends, Priscilla always approached her work with excellence and commitment. She embodied our staff values of joy, collaboration, accountability, and humility.

In late January, Priscilla notified us that she was resigning as custodian due to recent health challenges. Having retired from Miami a year ago, she recognized it was time to fully retire so that she may focus on her health and family.

A dedicated and excellent staff member, we'll all miss Priscilla in many specific ways. Personally, I'll miss her hard work, wisdom, wit, encouragement and much more. While we may miss her presence and work among us, we truly wish Priscilla a joyous and healthy retirement.

When you see Priscilla throughout the Oxford community, I encourage you to greet her as a sister in faith and take the opportunity to express how much gratitude we feel for her many contributions to our ministry. Truly, she is woven into the fabric of our congregation.

There's an old German proverb that says: *Begin to weave, and God will show you the pattern - and give you the thread.*

Throughout this pandemic, it is the community of Christ woven during this season of adversity that amazes me the most.

Thank you to all throughout our Oxford Presbyterian Church family!
Thank you to our elected congregational leaders and our committee members!
Thank you to our staff!

Day after day, week after week, month after month we continue weaving a strong, flexible, durable, resilient and beautiful congregational fabric. Thank you

for weaving with energy, intelligence, imagination and love! This fills me with such hope for the days of renewal and resurrection ahead.

May God Bless the Weavers who create this community of faith!
